CLAIMS

1. A method of providing video-on-demand (VOD) comprising the steps of :comprising the steps of :

5   -   repeatedly transmitting a set comprising a plurality of N video programs at staggered time intervals from a VOD server to a network for access by a view box of an user, and

-   responsive to a request for access to a selected one of said programs by said user,
        selecting that in-progress transmission of the selected program for which a

10 lead-in portion is shortest and storing said program in a buffer associated with the view box as it is transmitted,

        selecting, in a memory associated with the view box, a previously stored beginning portion of said selected program having a time length sufficient to compensate for that of said time intervals and outputting said beginning portion to said view box for

15 display, and

        continuously splicing the in-progress transmission stored in the buffer to a conclusion of the beginning portion,

characterized in that all different video programs in a same set are transmitted with time shifts equal to a fraction of the staggered interval.

20 2. A process according to claim 1, characterized in that all time shifts between two successive transmission are a same fraction 1/N of the staggered time interval .

3. A method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of downloading said beginning portion of a specific said program into all view boxes connected to said server during a last period of low network load prior to availability of said program from the

25 server.

4. A video on demand system having :

-   at a head end of the network, a server for repeatedly transmitting a set comprising a plurality of N video programs at staggered time intervals (δ) to a network for access by a view box of an user, and

30 -   at user's ends, a plurality of view boxunits each having a bidirectional connection with said server, each said endbox comprising :

-   a buffer for simultaneous writing in of a program transmitted on the network by said server and read out of said program with a time difference between writing in and read out of a same portion,

-   memory means for storing beginning portions of predetermined duration of a plurality of programs adapted to be received and displayed by said view box unit,

-   user operated means for selectively tuning said view box unit for reception of a program repeatedly originating from said server as successive transmissions at time intervals on different channels, and storing that transmission of said program which began most recently as it proceeds,

-   means for reading out the beginning portion of the program which has been selected from the memory means , and

–   switching means for splicing the selected beginning portion with the following portion of the same program for display when said following portion becomes available from the buffer,

characterized in that said server is arranged for transmitting all different video programs in a same set with time shifts equal to a fraction of the staggered interval.

5. A system according to claim 4, wherein said buffer is part of said memory means.